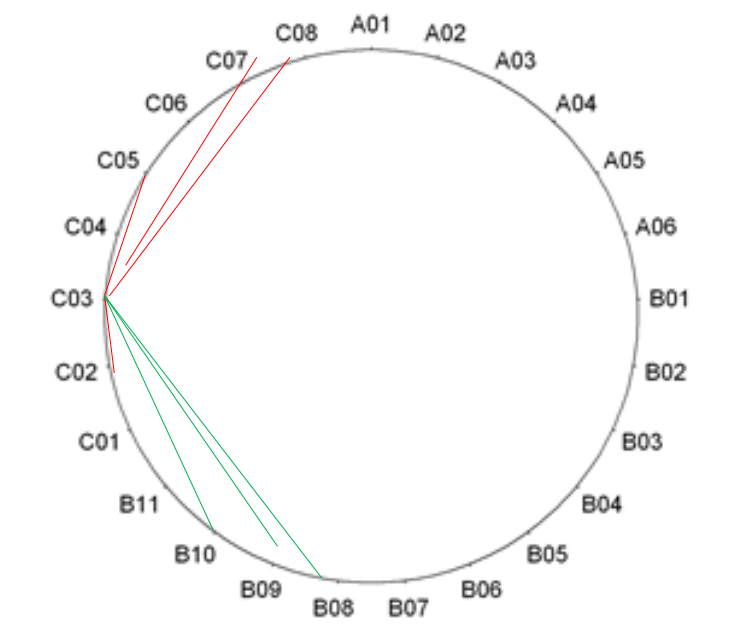


## C03

### Culture-Specific Human Interaction with Tropical Lowland Rainforests in Transformation in Jambi, Sumatra

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#### First results (work in progress)

Human interaction with tropical rainforests is usually determined by **people's experience and their "cultural baggage"**, acquired during their socialization, such as the value system, livelihood practices and social division of labour. The results of our first phase of fieldwork have shown that the extensive plantation industry in the Harapan area, mainly palm oil plantations, and the corresponding large-scale concessions granted by the state are the dominant economic driver. **These transnational economic systems have substantially transformed the livelihood systems of the different ethnic groups** living there: transmigrants and spontaneous migrants from different parts of Indonesia as well as "indigenous peoples" (such as the Batin Sembilan, also called Suku Anak Dalam). Most of them have turned to these "flex crops" (Pye and Bhattacharya 2013:ix). However, the way the different cultural communities deal with these crops and their cultivation varies. Moreover, access to land is largely determined by cultural membership. The struggle to get access to land dominates the endeavours of individuals and communities regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliations. These shared efforts partly unite them against the most powerful: the transnational companies and the state.

#### The struggle for land and labour bridges cultural differences



Guarded entrance of an oil palm plantation



Local people reclaiming their ancestral land



Co-operation: Dr. Stefanie Steinebach and Dr. Rosyani during a field trip

#### Further Goals:

1. To investigate **the difference in the way people** with diverging social and cultural backgrounds **adapt to the opportunities the lowland transformation systems offer** and how they construct their individual modes of livelihood.
2. To study the **migration chains** of spontaneous migrants and their motifs; the **formation of diasporas**.
3. To explore **people's own perspective** (emic perspective) of their livelihood systems, the tropical lowland forests and their hopes and expectations.
4. To investigate to what extent the **effects** the transformation of tropical lowland forests and state regulations have **on the people and their attitude towards and use of the tropical lowland rainforests**.

#### Methods:

The project uses both **quantitative and qualitative methods**, including multisited ethnography (Marcus 1998), **participant observation** and different forms of interviews, as well as archive studies and discourse analysis to investigate these socio-cultural groups. Since this project deals with cultural diversity in Jambi, it will, therefore, contribute to the CRC basic information on people's perspective of tropical lowland rainforest transformation and of local knowledge on ecosystems, ecosystem services and biodiversity distribution. The **theoretical framework** of this project is provided by approaches from **environmental anthropology** that investigates human-environment relations from a constructivist perspective and defines nature as a social category (Soper 1996).

#### Key linkages with:

**C01 Brümmer:** Smallholder productivity, market access; **C02 Dittrich/Faust:** Political and institutional impacts; **C07 Quaim/Schwarze:** Culture-specific economic household activities; **B06 Kreft:** Cultural knowledge of plants; **B09 Tscharnke/Clough:** Cultural influence on above-ground biodiversity patterns; **B10 Wiegand/Meyer/Lay:** Landscape level assessment of cultural functions of rainforest transformation systems.